



Notes from LEAD Editor

*There is no one equation or formula for developing into a contemporary leader. Leadership development takes continual work and practice, and a commitment to skill enhancement. A good leader incorporates the opinions of colleagues, is in search of personal growth, nurtures the growth of others, and is open to change. This month in **LEAD**, you will discover that strong leaders continually strive for self-improvement and positive change within their organizations.*

LEADERSHIP TIPS by COLIN POWELL

LEAD article

General Colin Powell is considered to be one of the premier leaders of the twenty-first century. In Colin Powell's speech "A Leadership Primer," he presents his views about what it takes to be a great leader. Below are four lessons Colin Powell believes today's leaders need to understand:

1. Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate and doubt, to offer a solution everybody can understand.

Effective leaders understand the KISS principle, Keep It Simple, Stupid. They articulate vivid, over-arching goals and values, which they use to drive daily behaviors and choices among competing alternatives. Their visions and priorities are lean and compelling, not cluttered and buzzword-laden. Their decisions are crisp and clear, not tentative and ambiguous. They convey an unwavering firmness and consistency in their actions, aligned with the picture of the future they paint. The result: clarity of purpose, credibility of leadership, and integrity in organizations.

2. Keep looking below surface appearances. Don't shrink from doing so (just) because you might not like what you find.

"If it isn't broke, don't fix it" is the slogan of the past. It's an excuse for inaction, a call to non-arms. It's a mind-set that assumes (or hopes) that today's realities will continue tomorrow in a tidy, linear and predictable fashion. In this sort of culture, you won't find people who pro-actively take steps to solve problems as they emerge.

3. Endeavors succeed because of the people involved. Only by attracting the best people will you accomplish great deeds.

In a brain-based economy, your best assets are people. We've heard this expression so often that it's become trite. But how many leaders really "walk the talk" with this stuff? Too often, people are assumed to be empty chess pieces to be moved around by grand viziers. How many immerse themselves in the goal of creating an environment where the best, the brightest, the most creative are attracted, retained, and most importantly, unleashed? Effective leaders create a climate where people's worth is determined by their willingness to learn new skills and grab new responsibilities.

4. Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

The ripple effect of a leader's enthusiasm and optimism is awesome. This involves a gung-ho attitude that believes, we can change things here, we can achieve awesome goals, and we can be the best.

-Adapted from "A Leadership Primer" a speech by General Colin Powell Chairman (Ret), Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of the Army, United States of America





6 STEPS FOR *Creating* A POSITIVE WORKPLACE

Leaders help set the tone in an organization. By remembering a few simple ideas during your tenure in the business world, you can dramatically improve the atmosphere in the workplace. Here are six ideas that can help promote a positive workplace:

- 1 Spend time with workers.** You can't know what employees think and feel, or what kind of time constraints or deadlines they're under unless you spend quality time with them each day or week.
- 2 Be careful of the words you use.** What three words are most likely to stop creativity and initiative cold? *Can't*, *don't*, and *no*. Use them sparingly. Try to lead employees in the right direction and help them see what needs to be changed or different if you think they are a little off-track.
- 3 Understand discipline.** When things go wrong, focus on changing work behaviors rather than criticizing workers. If someone misses a deadline, don't yell and cause a scene. Instead, address areas for improvements such as time management, procrastination, or underestimating the scope of an assignment. Make it a win-win relationship for the both of you.
- 4 Tell the truth.** Be honest and willing to share whatever information you can about projects and organizational issues. Doing so will help workers trust you – and will set an example for other employees to follow when it's their turn to open up and lead.
- 5 Smile.** Work on your own positive attitude. Being upbeat is contagious!
- 6 Empower!** Most people are happier when they feel in control of their destinies. Give workers as much autonomy as possible in their day-to-day activities.

–Adapted from *The Motivational Manager*, (800) 878-5331, www.ragan.com

EVALUATE YOUR PERFORMANCE THROUGH EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

You can't lead people if you don't know what you're doing right and wrong. The people who know you best are staff and the people right around you. The most important part of the feedback process is creating an atmosphere that encourages employees to be open and honest. Below are some suggestions for promoting helpful feedback:

Gather employees for an informal meeting. Keep the group small – five or six workers is an ideal number. If possible, meet according to individual department or work functions.

Set the right tone. Explain that nothing is wrong with the organization or the work being produced, but that you're seeking employees' perceptions of your own performance as well as organizational policies that affect their work.

Ask the key questions. "What am I doing well? and What should I do better?" Take notes. Resist the temptation to argue or justify actions employees disagree with. Reassure the group that you won't hold their comments against them at a later time and most importantly keep that promise.

After the meeting, be sure to take some action that demonstrates what you learned. Otherwise, staff will feel you're ignoring them, and they'll stop sharing their feedback with you.

–Adapted from *Positive Leadership*, (800) 878-5331, www.ragan.com

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CRITICISM AND FEEDBACK

There is a significant difference between criticism and feedback. As a leader, you need to understand how important it is to provide positive/constructive feedback, and not criticism to employees. Providing constructive feedback can greatly improve the relationship you have with employees. It is much easier to get your points across, and help employees grow, if you avoid these three kinds of statements:

Using absolutes. It's tempting to add hyperbole for emphasis: "Your report won't convince anybody." What does this statement really accomplish? To turn this into feedback, ask: "Who is the target audience? Do you think your report appeals to its target audience?" Remember to make the interaction as open and cooperative as possible.

Criticizing. Don't criticize the speaker or the statement. Being criticized makes most people defensive. Don't say: "You clearly don't understand this topic." To turn this into feedback, say: "I agree with your basic idea, let's further discuss your points. This is how I understand the topic, and then list some of

your thoughts." Talk about the points that you both agree upon and work together to bridge the gap with the rest.

Questioning motivation. Don't question the time and effort someone puts into their work. Don't say: "How did you come up with 'X' after all that time?" To turn this into feedback, ask: "Let's discuss the project. What results did you find? Explain the process that lead you to your results." Work with employees so their efforts and time can be better directed in the future. Remember, motivation in employees in something that needs to be valued.

–Adapted from "The New Culture of Criticism" by Seth Godin, FastCompany.com

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